WHIRRAKEE

November 2008 Vol. 29 No. 10

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Bob Ruddick, Ben Goonan, Jaydon Hoskin, Liz Graham, Diana Collier. *More committee members are urgently sought, see page 4.*

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active group that meets regularly (the Fauna Study Group) and other groups that meet at irregular intervals.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.
Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: This group has field excursions and the occasional lecture evening. Please consult the *Whirrakee* for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose meetings or excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 29, No. 10, November 2008

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgement should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
In this issue we have, unfortunately, the last instalment of the 'Reptiles of Bendigo'. Hopefully one day, this information will be in book form, but in the meantime, I want to thank Darren Green very much for making this important material available to our club members. We also have Glenise Moors President's report, that was delivered at the Annual General Meeting in September. I have written a short paragraph in response to the Honour of being given Life Membership (see if you can find it amongst the pages of this edition). Due to space limitations, Rod Orr's contribution to the October 'thing of the night' had to be held over. It involved giving something away and I thought this more of a christmassy thing, so will keep it till the December edition. Apologies to Rod. I hope that the giving away part can wait for a few weeks...
Lastly, a reminder that there will not be a Whirrakee in January, so anything happening in December AND January needs to be advertised in the next edition.

Front Page Illustration – Photographer: Karen Thomas
Karen was out a few nights ago checking her nesting boxes and she found .... four beautiful Australian Owlet Nightjars!
Karen says that their parents have been using this box for the last 6 years ... and that she has seen babies before, but not this close ...nor this many ...last year she found one dead one, so she is hoping these four make it. So do we.

Short notices

More Committee members needed

by Anne Bridley, BFNC secretary

At the recent September committee meeting, we didn't have a quorum, so we were unable to have a meeting. Numbers often drop off in winter due to members being away. We urgently need another couple of members, so that any essential club business can be done. Members who have served for many years rightly feel that they have done their bit. So we now have an opportunity for younger or newer members to have their say in this vital aspect of running our club.
Contact Anne Bridley (5449 3479) or Glenise Moors (54396254) for more information.

Also…
More rescuers and telephone operators are needed for the Wildlife Rescue & Information Network
After 11 years of operation, WRIN has found that its workload has increased to the point that more rescuers and telephone operators are needed.
Training will be provided by experienced WRIN members, and any time that can be given will be most appreciated.
If you feel that you can help, the Rescue phone no is 0419 356433
or email secretary@wrin.asn.au

Fauna Group Excursion
26th November

It seems the Fauna Group has been in hibernation most of this year.
We will meet for a social evening and enjoy the sounds of nature settling down for the night amongst the Redgums and the creek and sigh…

Where? See Diary Page (page 11)

President's Report 2007/2008
Glenise Moors

Sabine Wilkens has been the *Whirrakee* editor for many years – seventeen years! This requires her to attend most of our general meetings where she writes summaries of the evening presentation and 'thing of the night'. Quite often she gathers information on a theme that urges us to further reading. The cover illustration sometimes relates to an article inside and if we haven't contributed enough articles Sabine researches interesting topics to fill in the gaps. She has deadlines to keep and any hitches in printing to deal with so the publication is ready to be folded, wrapped and posted early in the month. In appreciation for everything she has done for our Field Naturalists Club, Sabine was asked to accept a Life Membership and was presented with a certificate.

Rod Orr has arranged a variety of interesting speakers for our meetings.
In October, Wayne Webster spoke on Indigenous Culture and how we might help in locating important sites. In November, Chris McGrath from the DPI spoke about Weed Alerts and asked members to join the Weed Spotters group. In December we had an enjoyable chat during a shared meal. Rob Watkins presented an audio/slide show of club members in the past. February was an evening of field observations and included a report by several members on a camp they enjoyed in the high country. Elvyne Hogan, Regional Manager of Trust for Nature, spoke about the Northern Plains Grasslands at the March meeting. Adam Muir, Manager Flora and Fauna at DSE described how to 'Recognise Threatened Species Habitat in Assessing Native Vegetation'. In May, Stacey Bloomfield, program coordinator of Waterkeepers Australia, explained how this organization evolved and described the importance of having the waterkeeper for a stream actually inspecting their patch for actions which affect its health. At the June meeting, Geoff Lay spoke on identification and recording of macrofungi then showed many inspirational images. In July, Chris

Tzaros from Birds Australia educated us on the migration movements and feeding habits of the Orange-bellied Parrot, Australia's rarest bird. To complete the year, Phil Dyson, a local hydrogeologist, treated us to a fascinating talk on the Amazing Trees of Kamarooka and the ingenious methods used to monitor fluid movements.

Thing of the Night
March –'Just add water', natural responses to a downpour –Matthew Comer
April – 'Mistletoe species of our region – Rodney Orr
May – 'Swainson peas' – Ben Goonan
June – 'Dianella species' – Ben Goonan
July – 'Upgrading and possible extension to White Hills Botanical Gardens' – Kevin Walsh, Planner for City of Bendigo.

Excursions – organized by Richard Goonan
Sept 15 – Roadside Conservation with Ben Goonan
Sept 22 – Orchid Survey with Geoff Neville
Oct 13 – Mandurang plants with Richard Goonan
Nov 17 – Mt Alexander birds, native plants and weeds with Richard Goonan
Jan 23 – Kangaroo Flat Gardens, outdoor meeting with Fauna Group
Fauna excursions - Friday mornings checking nest boxes with Maurie Lewis

As usual, members have represented our Club at community and inter-club activities such as SEANA Camp-outs held at the Mornington Peninsula and at Naracoorte, ANN get-together at Mary River in Northern Territory, biannual bird survey for Water Treatment Plant, biannual Swift Parrot survey and several activities for the Spring in the Bendigo Bush program. Members have been involved in local issues, writing submissions and letters, attending meetings and lobbying politicians. Major issues have been the fuel reduction burning of local bushland and the protection of the River Redgum forests. A small number of members prepared the newsletter for posting each month. The meeting hall maintenance and bookings has been carried out primarily by one member with an annual working-bee to spruce up the site. The surrounding indigenous garden required regular weeding and some planting during the year. This job has been undertaken by several members. The librarian displayed our books and encouraged members to borrow them more frequently.

Thank you to everyone who helped with various activities of the Club during the year. I have especially appreciated support from the office bearers and committee members.

BFNC October General Meeting
Paul Foley: 'When you are old, Saturn is a thing you are glad to have seen…'

by Sabine Wilkens

Paul Foley was going to give us a run-down on the solar system and recent discoveries about its planets, a very large topic in every sense of the word.

Our solar system is about 4000 mio years old. All the components of this system are made of the same material, originally in gas and dust form. Much kinetic energy was converted to heat energy and this powered the young sun. As the temperature got higher and higher, eventually at 15mio degrees, fusion reactions (of Hydrogen atoms) kicked off in the core and the temperature of the sun stabilized
The planets closer to the sun (the four 'inner' planets, Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars) were 'cooked' by this heat. That is why they are rocky. On the outer planets light material and gas are still present.

The sun still spews out ions and we call this 'solar wind'. Paul had a fantastic movie showing this (these solar winds can only be seen when the bright disc of the sun is blocked out). Sometimes these 'winds' hit the earth and interact with the magnetic field

at the poles (because there, the magnetic field is strongest) to form the beautiful auroras. In 1989, there was a 'solar maximum' and one million tons of this charged 'wind material' (like a plasma) hit the Canadian Electricity grid and melted it! These winds form a front at the edge of our solar system as they run into the very sparse interstellar gas.

After this short introduction, Paul then proceeded to deal with the planets in order of distance from the sun, starting with:

Mercury

This planet has a lot of iron, as all those inner planets that have been cooked by the sun (because the heavy iron was left behind). Dominant features of its surface are its craters, like on our moon, where the vast expanses of craters are called 'lava seas'. An impacting meteorite (which may be only 10km in diameter) will make a much larger crater (100s of km in diameter). This is because the kinetic energy of its impact is so great, rock is melted in a vast circumference form it, forming these 'lava seas'. Sometimes they have a mountain in the middle of it. The mountain forms as the molten rock shoots up at the impact site and solidifies in the centre. Paul thought it would be cool to climb one of those (sometimes quite tall) mountains and look around at the vast lava sea. I agree.

Venus

This is the second closest planet to the sun but in spite of its 'nice' name, seems quite an uncomfortable place. It has an atmospheric pressure 90 times that of our own atmosphere (equivalent to 1km below the ocean). Its atmosphere consists of CO_2 and H_2SO_4 and the temperature is 430°C.

It is interesting to compare Venus and Earth in terms of their development. They started very similar, same mass, same composition and both got cooked the sun early in their life. Dense material fell to the inner core and is kept molten there due to its radioactivity. The earth releases this energy through volcanoes and plate movements. On Venus, because of its dense atmosphere, the heat cannot escape or be released. It was found that the surface of Venus is 'only' 400-500 million years old and, unlike earth, it is all the same age. The current understanding of this phenomenon is that Venus suffers from episodic mega-catastrophies about every 500 million years. During these episodes, heat energy is released violently, which causes the entire surface to melt and the atmosphere gets blown away from the released energy. Then, when things have cooled a little, the atmosphere reforms. It has been estimated that the last episode was 400mio years ago, so watch out, it may happen again soon.

Both Venus and Earth started off with an atmosphere of CO_2, water vapour and methane. On Earth, after it had cooled sufficiently, rain started falling and dissolved some of the atmospheric CO_2. The deposits that formed from this, resulted in carbonate rocks. This carbon that got to the earth's surface is the basis of life on earth. All of the carbon (originating in this early atmosphere) is still circulating through all living things on the planet.

On Venus, due to the shorter distance to the sun and thus higher temperature, any rain that might have formed did not reach the ground, but re-evaporated – so the CO_2 stayed in the atmosphere, and no life evolved as a result.

Five probes have landed on Venus, the toughest lasted 45 minutes. Two of these successfully sent pictures. The rock shown by these is 'just' basalt, like any around here. Most people have heard what happened to one or the other of the ones that failed to send pictures or analyses of material. It makes your stomach turn in disappointment for the people involved...the energy, time and emotions involved in such missions – only to find that the camera lens does not come off, or the sensor analyses the earth-made release clip of the equipment, rather than the rocks themselves because it happened to land on it, or any other number of unfortunate events – horrendous.

Earth

The far more gentle earth has an average temperature of 15°C. Violent phenomena also

occur but not on the scale as on Venus. Energy is released through volcanism and we saw a very impressive image of an explosion in the Philippines in 1991, with the somewhat comforting assurance, that, at least the photographer, had made it to safety in time.
Paul had another wonderful short film clip for us, in which the astronaut John Young was honing around on the moon surface in a buggy. Interestingly, the dust from the wheels simply fell off, and did not form clouds like it would on earth. This is because there is no atmosphere on the moon and a feather and a hammer would fall and reach the ground at the same time. Young's golf shot on the moon is also still the longest ever recorded, and he wasn't even a golfer. Actually, it would be fun on the moon, trying out all these different effects.

Mars

The red planet is red due to iron oxide dominanting its surface. Its atmosphere is about 5% of that of the earth. Mars cooled faster than earth and formed a solid crust but this was breached at some stage and the scar is about 150km wide. Mars also has shield volcanoes, of which one is 27km high. There is no flowing water, but evidence of past flows and weathering is apparent. Paul had yet another film clip with one of the mission's roving vehicles (like a remote control car) stuck in the sand. The film showed that eventually it got out, but the shadows moving across it, indicated that many days had passed for it to be freed. Another heart-stopper for the ground control people!

Jupiter

Onto to giant planets now. Had Jupiter been only 80 times bigger it could have become a sun! Jupiter gives off more energy than goes into it and for that reason it is still contracting. There are a large number of moons, four of which are called the Galilean moons, named after their discoverer. Of these, Io is the most volcanic object in the whole of our solar system. While on earth, it takes about 300 million years to re-new the entire surface by volcanic activity, on Io, this process only takes 100 years!

Saturn

Paul thought that when you are old, having seen Saturn and its rings through a telescope is one of those things you are glad about. The rings are very wide in comparison to their thickness, and it is a must for astronomers to see them edge on, at least once. Paul had a superb and eerie image of two of Saturn's moons, one behind the other, and the thin sliver of the side-on rings above them.
Some of the moons exhibit a violent past as well as present cryovolcanism. It is quite unbelievable that the various spacecraft passing by, have captured these images with such clarity. Titan, the solar system's second largest moon, possesses an atmosphere of methane. Before the Cassini (Hugyen) probe was sent down to it, a lot of what to expect there had been worked out mathematically. For example, that the surface beneath the cloud cover should be icy, and that the atmospheric pressure should be similar to that on earth. The actual view sent to earth by the probe was remarkably similar to those science fiction scenes modeled on earth, with seas of liquid (albeit methane, not water), with islands, eroded river valleys, rough mountains and rounded hills (albeit made of ice, not rock). Paul liked the idea of going for a picnic (at $-170^{\circ}C$?) and cooking your sausages there with oxygen, rather than with 'gas', that we use on earth. Unfortunately your feet would freeze on the way to find a nice spot.

Paul and the audience were so enthusiastic about the whole topic, it was hard for all of us to agree on an end of the presentation. He had 'just one more' beautiful image, which then sparked questions from the audience and led to another beautiful image. The haunting images (normal and infrared shots) of the Sombrero Galaxy were one of the closing photos, as was a shot taking over three days by the Hubble telescope. The telescope had been pointed at a part of the sky where 'there was not much happening', yet after the long exposure, it turned out that a tiny area of the sky (the size of a match head held at arms length), contained thousands of galaxies with each galaxy having thousands of millions of

stars. In Bendigo, if we are lucky, we might have a dark backyard or paddock to watch the stars at night, but what we see there is such a tiny fraction of what is actually out there. Paul's very last image was that of a stellar nursery, but at that stage I had already drifted off into the vastness of it all…

While talking about Mars, Paul got onto asteroids. If the size of an object is above a certain value (>800km), gravity will pull it into a sphere (eventually), but if below that value, it can stay lumpy and asymmetrical forever. Eros is only 20 x 10km and might, in fact, have originated from two asteroids that once had collided. Here is a tricky question: Are asteroids, like Eros, potato-shaped or are potatoes asteroid shaped? You can imagine what Paul thinks… but what do you think?

One spectacular image taken by the Galileo probe showed an asteroid with a tiny moon. This moon was only 1km in diameter and again, would make a fun excursion. Paul said, if you threw a ball in one direction and waited 20 minutes, it would come round and you just turn around and catch it. Also, with a big enough run-up, you could jump off this planet (but why would you want to?). The image of this tiny sphere brought to mind the planets from the book, ' The Little Prince' by Antoine de Saint Exupery. The trouble he had with the baobab trees and all the different curious inhabitants he came across…
So when I got home, I started reading it again.

The discoveries in outer space over the last few years have been fascinating and tantalizing. However, it is lucky in a way, that they are happening only in tiny steps. This means that there is still plenty of room for the imagination. Paul certainly sparked this in all of us during this presentation.

Sacred Kingfisher in Bendigo
For several minutes from 1.40pm on the afternoon of the 22nd October, Clive Fisher observed a sacred kingfisher (*Halcyon sancta*) through binoculars on his Hills hoist.

The Snakes of the Bendigo District

by Darren Green

Part 3 (final): Front Fanged Snakes, *Elapidae*

Elapids belong to the group of snakes whose fangs are located to the front of the mouth (as opposed to rear fanged snakes such as the *Colubrids*). Of the 75 species native to Australia, only some 20 are regarded as dangerous to humans, 3 of which are found in the Bendigo district. The Copperhead, although not found in the Bendigo district, occurs to the east and south, and is regarded as dangerously venomous. As all *Elapids* are venomous to varying degrees, their bites should be considered as dangerous to humans, especially when a positive identification of the species is not known. Basic first aid for snake bite victims should be applied immediately and medical attention sought as soon as possible.

Elapids are generally diurnal, or active into the evening on warm to hot days, generally from spring through autumn. They are generally found sheltered in burrows or under rocks, fallen timber and other ground debris. Young are considered as self sufficient at birth/hatching and are tiny replicas of the adults.

Eastern Tiger Snake
Notechis scutatus
Recognised by its large scales and broad head, the Tiger Snake is renowned for its 'tiger stripes' of yellow. Its colour varies through shades of browns, or grey to black, with yellow to cream stripes which may or may not be readily noticeable. Belly scales are yellow to cream in colour. Most Tiger snakes reach around 1.2m in length. They inhabit woodlands that are in close proximity to waterways, from Mandurang, Mount Alexander, Sedgwick, Sutton Grange, Shelbourne East, and Dingee. They have also been recorded north along the Murray River.

Notechis scutatus, Eastern Tiger Snake

Food generally consists of frogs, tadpoles and lizards, as well as small birds, mammals and fish. Around 15 and 40 young are born from January to April. When threatened, the Tiger Snake flattens its body and strikes at its assailant. The Eastern Tiger Snake is considered dangerously venomous to humans.

Red-bellied Black Snake
Pseudechis porphyriacus

A glossy black snake, with pinkish-red to crimson belly, which may grow to around 2.0m in length. It is generally found in close proximity to waterways such as swamps, creeks, rivers, lagoons and channels. It is terrestrial, however takes to water quite readily. Its diet largely consists of frogs, but will on occasion eat lizards, small mammals, fish and other snakes. Red-bellied Black Snakes have known to venture into urban areas as close to Bendigo as Spring Gully. Records are from Heathcote, Sutton Grange, Mandurang, Sedgwick, One Tree Hill, Big Hill, Kangaroo Flat, Shelbourne, and Maldon. Around 12 young are born in a litter during January to April. Although not considered as an aggressive snake, a bite is potentially harmful to humans and it is regarded as dangerously venomous.

Eastern Brown Snake
Pseudonaja textilis

One of the more common snakes encountered in the Bendigo district, the Brown Snake is a uniform brown colour with irregular blotches on some belly scales. Juveniles usually have a black head and nape, with occasional black bars or stripes across the body.

The Brown Snake may reach some 2.0m in length, however most snakes encountered are only around 1.2m. Some people erroneously call large Brown Snakes 'King Browns.' King Brown Snakes, or more appropriately Mulga Snakes, belong to the Black Snake family and do not occur in Victoria (closest proximity is central to northern NSW). Preferring open habits, Brown Snakes occupy most drier habitats in the Bendigo district, tending to favour farmlands. They feed on mice, rats and other small mammals, along with birds and lizards. Females lay an average 15 eggs from October to December, with young hatching some 50 days later. This quick and agile snake is aggressive when disturbed, often raising its fore-body as a warning, and will readily bite in self-defence if provoked. A bite may be fatal to humans and this species is regarded as dangerously venomous.

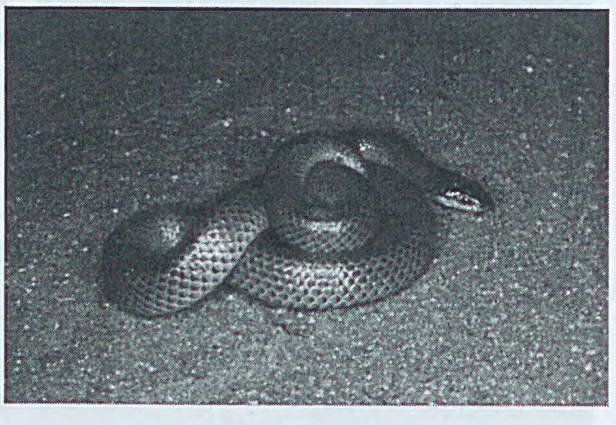
Bandy Bandy ***Vermicella annulata***

This snake is easily recognised by the alternating black and white bands around the body. It may reach around 600mm in length and feeds exclusively on Blind Snakes (*Ramphotyphlops sp.*). Clutch sizes range from two to thirteen eggs, laid in February to March. In the Bendigo area this species is rarely observed and generally believed to be vulnerable, or extinct in some areas of northern Victoria due to land clearing and cats. Records are from Inglewood, Lanelly, Wedderburn and Echuca. This shy species is moderately venomous, with bites being rare, and not considered as dangerous to humans. This snake has a characteristic, defensive posture by raising its body in arches or hoops and exposing its flattened and brightly marked belly.

Unechis **species**

These snakes are still *Elapids*, but are included separately here as they are so similar in appearance. Three closely related snakes are of particular importance to the Bendigo district. They are small, inoffensive snakes, attaining a maximum length of 60cm, but are usually smaller. They are relatively harmless to humans, with bites described to be like that of an ant, with localised burning sensation. Having said that, one person has been known to die from the bite of *Unechis flagellum*. This occurred at Mount Alexander. These three *Unechis* species all appear to meet, and at times overlap, in the Bendigo region. Dwyer's Snake's (*Unechis dwyeri*) naturally occur in the Box-Ironbark Forest 'belt' from Maiden Gully to north-eastern Victoria (Wodonga). The Little Whip Snake (*Unechis flagellum*) has been recorded from Spring Gully, Big Hill, Shelbourne, Lockwood and Mt Alexander in the Bendigo district. It otherwise occurs in the south-western Box-Ironbark Forest 'belt' of Victoria, to the east as far as Melbourne. From the north-west Box-Ironbark Forest 'belt' come the Mitchell's Short-Tailed Snake (*Unechis nigriceps*), being found at Wedderburn and the Whipstick. The Bendigo district Box-Ironbark Forest is special in that three closely related species meet to join the 'three belts' which appears typical with other species occurring in the district.

Dwyer's Snake ***Unechis dwyeri***



This small snake may reach 600mm in length. It is very similar in appearance to *U. flagellum* and *U. nigriceps*, however it is distinguished by having 15 mid-body scales and appears to have a more glossy, depressed (flat) head and no distinguished brow. Similarly it is often confused with juvenile *P. textilis*, which are less robust. The head is glossy black, while the body is dark brown to red-brown above and cream below. Dwyer's Snakes inhabit box-ironbark forests from Maiden Gully to the east of Bendigo, and are typically found sheltered under rocks by day. Records are from Rushworth, Whipstick, Maiden Gully, and Wellsford Forest. They prey on small skinks and give birth to around 4 young from January to April. Their venom

is moderate with humans having reactions similar to ant bites. They are not considered as dangerous.

Little Whip Snake ***Unechis flagellum***

This small snake may reach 500mm in length. It is very similar in appearance to *U. dwyeri* and *U. nigriceps*, however it is distinguished by having 17 mid-body scales and appears more robust. Similarly, it is often confused with juvenile *P. textilis*, which are less robust. The head is black with a divided (or occasionally joined) black bar between the nostrils. Its body is dark brown, grey to red-brown above and pale yellow to orange below. Little Whip Snakes inhabit box-ironbark forests and granite outcrops to the south of Bendigo, where they are typically found sheltered under rocks by day. They have been recorded from One Tree Hill, Mt Alexander, Mandurang, Big Hill, Spring Gully, Sedgwick, and Shelbourne East. These snakes prey on small skinks and give birth to 2 to 6 young from January to March. Their venom is moderate with humans having reactions similar to ant bites. They are not considered as dangerous, although one fatality has been recorded.

Unechis flagellum

Mitchell's short-tailed Snake
Unechis nigriceps

This small snake may reach 600mm in length. It is very similar in appearance *U. dwyeri* and *U. flagellum*, however, it is distinguished by having 17 mid-body scales and a dark vertebral stripe. Like other *Unechis* it is often confused with juvenile *P. textilis,* which are less robust. The head is black, which extends the length of the body as vertebral stripe or zone, and fades to a lighter brown along the flanks. The belly is cream or white in colour. Also known as the Southern Black-backed Snake, it is known to generally occupy mallee woodlands to the west of Bendigo. Records are scarce, however sightings have occurred in the Whipstick, Inglewood, Kingower, and Wedderburn. They usually shelter under rocks and ground debris by day. This snake preys on small skinks and gives birth to 3 to 6 young in late December to March. Their venom is moderate, with humans having reactions similar to ant bites. They are not considered as dangerous.

Acknowledgements
I wish to acknowledge my old 'herping' partner Dale Gibbons who graciously bestowed his knowledge and records.

References

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Wilson, S.K. & Knowles, D.G. (1988) *Australia's Reptiles: A Photographic Reference to the Terrestrial Reptiles of Australia*, Sydney: Collins Publishers.

BFNC Life Membership for your editor
I was very honoured when this was given on me at the Annual General Meeting with so many nice words along with it, I do get lots of help, so a special thank you goes to those unofficial sub-editors. Having said that, an official position as co-editor is always open for those who want to try something different. I really do wish I had a bit more creative time to make more of our newsletter, because it is an enjoyable job most of the time. Darren Green occasionally sends examples of newsletters from groups he is involved with, and when I look at those, I just think WOW, we could/should... However, then comes the end of the month and the magazine has to be done quickly and one goes into default mode and it looks A4 size and blue, as always.
So – if anybody has any bright ideas that won't cost the earth, please let me know.

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings

Wednesday, November 12 **7.30pm**
Jim Radford: 'Woodland birds and their habitat requirements'

Wednesday, December 10 **6.30pm**
Christmas break-up, shared dinner, bring some food to share. (BYO everything else)
Please Note – earlier starting time.
Speaker: Peter Ellis 'Folk Music'.

Excursions

Contact Richard Goonan if you have any comments, questions or suggestions for excursions (ph 0423418815).

Fauna Group

This group normally meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm. However, the next meeting will be outdoors:

Wednesday, November 26th
Out of hibernation, the Fauna Group welcomes B.F.N. friends and family to join us for a meal and social evening in the midst of nature. Besides an inspection of the creek and red gum habitat, the sounds of birds and animals either settling or becoming active for the night is always of interest.

Where: Kangaroo Flat Botanical Garden, end of Camp St. Kangaroo Flat
At: 6.30 pm
BYO: BBQ vege burger, meat, utensils, thermos etc. Besides good cheer, people may like to bring a salad or savoury plate to share.

Contact: Kerrie 5447 8017

Regular Fauna Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 041 356433.